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WARNING: TOPIC: DOMESTIC POLITICAL, INTERNATIONAL POLITICAL, TERRORISM

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COUNTRY: AFGHANISTAN, UNITED KINGDOM, UNITED STATES

SUBJ: Camp X-Ray Briton Accuses UK Radical Muslim Cleric of Recruiting Terrorists

SOURCE: London The Sunday Times (Internet Version-WWW) in English 14 Apr 02

TEXT:

[Article by Hala Jaber and Nicholas Rufford with additional reporting by Dipesh Gadher and Nayab Chohan: "Camp X-Ray Confession Reveals UK Terror Link"]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] A Briton being held at Camp X-Ray, the high-security US prison for al-Qa'ida suspects, has blamed a radical Muslim cleric living in London for turning him to terrorism.

In a confession to British and American investigators, Feroz Abbasi claimed that members of Finsbury Park mosque - the base of cleric Abu Hamza - helped to organise his terrorist training and provided him with air tickets to Afghanistan.

Abbasi, 22, has also said that at one stage he wanted to be a suicide bomber to die a martyr.

The confession, the first to emerge from the five British prisoners at Camp X-Ray in Cuba, is likely to embarrass the Home Office. Since arriving in Britain from Egypt in the late 1970s, Hamza has been given a British passport and thousands of pounds in welfare benefits. He was linked to a plot to blow up western targets in Yemen for which five Britons were jailed three years ago, including his son Mustapha Kamel.

Last night Andrew Dismore, the Labour MP for Hendon who has been investigating Hamza and other Islamic fundamentalists in Britain for two years, said he would be writing to the home secretary as a matter of urgency. "I think that Abu Hamza is a very dangerous individual at the centre of a spider's web of evil. I hope we now have the evidence that will enable the authorities to take action," he said.

Abbasi studied at Finsbury Park under Hamza after abandoning a college computer course and deserting his local mosque in Croydon, south London, in search of more radical Islamic teaching in 1999. His mother, Zumrati Juma, last saw him in December 2000, when he

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returned home to pick up a pair of army boots, saying he wanted to go to Afghanistan.

During his interrogation, Abbasi said he flew to Pakistan before crossing the Afghan border to train at the Khaldan terrorist camp. There he is believed to have met Richard Reid, the airline shoe bomber, and David Hicks, an Australian now at Camp X-Ray. At least one of the September 11 hijackers is also thought to have trained at the camp.

Under questioning by MI5 officers, Abbasi said Hamza was his spiritual mentor. Other suspects known to have worshipped at Finsbury Park include Zacarias Moussaoui, the so-called "20th hijacker" now in custody in America, and Djamel Beghal, a French-Algerian accused of masterminding a plot to blow up the US embassy in Paris.

Hamza is entitled to disability benefits and uses metal claws after losing his hands while allegedly fighting with the mujaheddin against Soviet troops in Afghanistan.

He has always denied involvement in terrorism and has been careful to stay within the law. But Hamza preaches hardline views that chime with the anti-Israeli and anti-western beliefs of many of his followers.

On Friday he led prayers at the mosque, calling on Muslims across the world to stand firm against Ariel Sharon, the Israeli prime minister. He has pledged to continue his diatribes, while admitting that the Charities Commission had withdrawn support from the mosque because of the inflammatory content of his sermons.

Hamza denied he had recruited Abbasi, and said his claims might have been made under duress. "There are many people who come and go at the mosque. I don't make special relations with anybody. I just deliver my sermon and go," he said.

When asked if he was a member of al-Qa'ida, Hamza said he was in a meeting and put down the phone.

[Description of Source: London The Sunday Times (Internet Version-WWW) in English -- conservative newspaper covered for worldwide reports]

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